William Crawshay, Esqr. &c. &c. &c.

No 18, Gate Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, 11th. Nov. 1829.

Sir,

If the pursuit of an object, tantamount to that of "causing two blades of "grass to grow in the place of one" can be truly considered as tending, on the whole, to national welfare, I am sure that an account of the progress in such a pursuit cannot but be acceptable to you; and, as such, I do myself the honour of laying before you the following Statement of information and particulars, relative to the Cultivation of the Indian Corn (Zea) in England.

My Father, in his Treatise on Indian Corn, to which he has given the name of "Cobbett's Corn", in order to distinguish the species which he considered best adapted to this Climate, has bestowed on me, but too much praise for the part belonging to me in the introduction of this plant, and the recapitulation of which is to the effect, 1st.— that a few seeds were originally brought to England by me in 1826; 2nd— that, after propagating it that summer, I gave the produce to Mr. Walker, of Hunland in the parish of Worth, Sussex, who planted with it rather more than a quarter of an acre, in an open field; 3rd.— that Mr. Walker harvested about fourteen bushels of ears, which, after allowing for dilapidations by vermin in the field, was at the rate of upwards of forty bushels of shelled corn to the acre; and 4th.— that, with this experience and the seed afforded by Mr. Walker's crop, my Father planted eleven acres last year: to which facts it may now be added, that there have been this year perhaps several thousand plantations from the seed arising therefrom.

What I have now to lay before you, Sir, is the account of a distinct Species. But, before I do so, I beg you to observe, that there are two hundred species, differing more or less, and some of them extremely, in divers respects; or, exhibiting divers series or chains (in the whole tribe) connecting regular gradations of properties, one properly being that of Constitution. The question, whether Providence have ordered varieties of Constitution to correspond with variations of Climate over the whole Globe, I do not propose to answer further than with regard to England, and here only from experience. My experience, however, did certainly result a good deal from reflections upon these facts, together with observations made when I was abroad; and, I was led to the general conclusion, that the Constitution of this plant was adapted to the Climate of England, or was hardy, in an inverse proportion with its size or grandeur of appearance; and also, that its produce on a given measure of ground, was likewise in an inverse proportion with its size.

After minutely attending to the matter in every respect, and having narrowly watched the growth of this Corn under all the different circumstances in which I had seen it, I was so confirmed in the opinion that, if it were designed by Nature that there should be a Corn or Zea to flourish in this part of the Universe; and if the sort under trial did not arrive at undeniable perfection: by the commencement of last Spring I was so convinced that, if there required any thing completely to establish so great an increase of production as is offered by the Zea in England, it must be to discover a still

smaller

smaller kinds: being convinced of this, I resolved not to suffer the season to pass without making an endeavour towards the discovery; and, I succeeded in procuring from a friend abroad, a sort, to a description of which I now beg your attention.

As objects of curiosity, my friend sent me various kinds, ten altogether: being a selection of those which bore the strongest marks of variety, in regard to size and colour perceivable in the seed; and, in many respects in the form of the plant, and also differing in the quality of the grain. I received these kinds just previous to the proper season for planting, and, numbering them, gave them to Mr. Thomas Poynter, Junr. a respectable market-gardener in the parish of Fulham, requesting him to try them fairly, by the side of a plantation which he was about to make from seed obtained from my Father; and, I have now received his account of the results of this trial, containing a description of the success of the different sorts, with the exception of No. Ten, which was set Black, and which (the seed being in one entire ear) I presented as a curiosity to another person, in whose garden (as I suppose it would any where) it has failed. The account of Mr. Poynter is as follows: ——— "Mr. W. Cobbett. Junr. — Sir, I find, by your letter to me, that it was on the "7th. May last, that you sent me nine sorts of the Indian Corn, requesting me to plant them on the same "ground and at the same time with your Father's sort of Indian Corn. On the following morning, I sowed a small "quantity of each sort, with a similar quantity of your Father's, in a bed in which I had sown two days before, "all I had intended to plant of the latter. The Corn was all up in about four days' time, and on the 19th. "May I planted it all out, upon a piece of ground of about thirty-two rods, in rows at two feet and a half a "under and one foot from plant to plant: about thirty rods being planted with your Father's Corn, leaving "room for the trial of your nine sorts, in about one row of each.

"A crop of radishes had been pulled off the ground the day before planting, and the ground was "dug on the same day it was planted. Immediately afterwards I put a row of White Cos Lettuces between "every row of Corn, and they came to perfection without injuring the Corn in the least. I had the ground hoed "twice, and, after the Lettuces were cleared, dug between the rows; but, never earthed the plants, "considering that (this devil of a Summer) there was mould enough about their roots without smothering "them with more.

"Mr. Cobbett's sort has thrived beyond my expectation. On the thirty rods planted with his "sort, there are about two thousand two hundred and eighty plants; that is, fifty-seven rows, about "forty in a row. According to the best of my judgment, I think every four rows will produce, at least, "half a bushel of shelled corn. The good ears on a plant will average four. But, more of this another "time.

"As for the sorts I had from you, I herewith send you a sample of every one, with my opinion of "each; but, judge for yourself.

" No. 1 — No use to attempt to grow it in England.
" 2 — This would do, in favourable seasons; but, not so well as Cobbett's Corn.
" 3 — The same as above.
" 4 — No use here.
" 5 — It will not ripen.
" No. 6 — Will not ripen.
" 7 — Useless to attempt to grow it.
" 8 — The hottest Summer that England ever had, would not, I think, ripen a grain of this Corn. But, its growth is strong and thick, its foliage beautiful; and would, doubtless, make excellent green food for cattle on rich land, as the quantity to cut green would exceed Rye, four-fold.
" 9 — This is the most diminutive of the whole tribe that I have yet seen. It would yield more than Beans per acre, on light sandy soils, on which hardly any thing of the Corn (or grain) tribe will "grow; I mean, a crop exceeding the largest crop of beans. It has no superfluity of growth about it. It has hardly "any leaf, no suckers, and will average three ears to a plant. In light land, one foot from row to row and "six inches from plant to plant (in the row) would be room enough; and, after transplanting (the cheapest and "most certain mode) two careful common hoeings will keep it clean. It has, this year, ripened as early as "Wheat; I mean, English Wheat. — Excuse haste and blunders, and I am, Sir, your obliged servant,
" Thomas Poynter, Junr. North End, Fulham, 26th. Octr. 1829."

Mr. Poynter has, with his family, been a large occupier of some of the best land in the parish of Fulham for the last forty years, and, as the credit due to the greater part of what I shall have to say depends upon the truth of the facts above stated, I am anxious for you to observe that he is a man of scrupulous veracity and fairness in all dealings; and, one of several circumstances which I must honourable to his character for public spirit I must do myself the pleasure of stating here: namely, that after filling the office of High Constable for the Manor of Fulham, last year, an unanimous vote of thanks to him for his upright and able conduct, was recorded in the Manor books; which is the more remarkable as it was unprecedented in the Manor.

I have first to remark upon the facts contained in this letter, that the fitness or unfitness of the different species of Corn for this Climate, is by no means to be decided only according to the gradations of size. For instance, No. 1, which is called "Sweet Corn" (being as sweet as sugar) is of middling size, both in the ear and the whole plant. I believe it is used in this country but for the table, and in the green stole; and the number 1 was affixed to it by me from its being the first in point of delicacy. Also, No. 8, which is called "Perled Corn" (from the beautiful appearance of the grain) bears ears much smaller than Cobbett's Corn, and the smallest of any with the exception of No. 9. It is evident, therefore, that no rule can be drawn, upon the relative sizes of species which differ in several points; and, with this remark, I will dismiss the consideration of every sort but No. 9.

It is another question, whether species whose difference is confined to the particular of size, may not possess corresponding difference in Constitution, qualifying them for various climates; and, as elucidating this question, I must beg your particular attention to the parts of Mr. Poynter's letter containing the contrast of No. 9 with Cobbett's Corn. Specimens of each show, first, that the ear contains an equal number of rows of grain and an equal number of grains in each row, in both sorts, and that the colour of both is yellow: the one, in short, appears, in all respects, the diminutive of the other. Now,

No. 9

№ 9 was sowed a few days later than № 10 (as I will for the present call its rival first on the ground, leaving "Cobbett" as a generic term or nom de famille); but, both sorts were planted on the same day, in the same ground, and received afterwards the same cultivation. Yet, № 9 "ripens "with English Wheat"; it was, as I saw, dead ripe before the end of August, and has now been actually harvested more than six weeks. Whereas, though Mr. Poynter does not mention the present state of № 10, it is because it is unnecessary to say that it is not harvested at this moment.

Mr. Poynter has not a large quantity of № 9 to exhibit; but, he has about an hundred ears, and it is impossible to see them without being convinced that they are ripened to perfection. There is no appearance of mould or of insufficiency in any respect, and this without artificial drying. It is evident, that the largest mow of a barn might be filled with it without danger of heating, as it is brought in from the field. I know very well that this is more than could be done even in America, with any of the kinds grown there: but, I assert without any restriction, that the kind of which I speak arrives at greater ripeness here by the 1st. of September than any corn grown in the State of Pennsylvania does by the middle of October; and this is the chief excellence of this plant and the chief point of superiority as a corn-producing country which England possesses (as I believe will be found), is, in having a climate and soil adapted to it.

The convenience of a crop which goes into the ground on the 20th. May, and which comes off on the 1st. September, needs nothing said upon it; but, I will now present to your view as briefly as I can the virtues of this plant with regard to the amount of crop it is calculated to produce, the foundation of what I have to say being drawn from the authority of Mr. Poynter.

Mr. Poynter estimates the crop of № 10 to be at least half a bushel of shelled corn to every four rows of the fifty-rows contained in the thirty rod of ground; that is to say, nearly half a bushel to a rod. He states the number of plants to each row at about forty (here he has omitted to remark that the plants do not now average one to a foot, as when planted, which is owing to the wire-worm and to the strong plants sometimes over-powering the weak ones); upon inspection, I have found that there are about forty-five plants to a row, averaging fifteen inches a-part. Now, it is curious that, supposing these to be forty plants to a row, the number of ears to each, four, and eight average ears (as may be easily seen) going to one pint of shelled corn, the produce would be, just half a bushel and three quarts to a rod of ground.

One source of regret would instantly arise in the mind of any lover of his country, from its being so satisfactorily proved to him that its soil was capable of producing so immense a crop of a kind suitable for the food of man, in the apprehension that the same climate which would cause luxuriance sufficient to yield so great a mass, might be ungenial for the ripening or securing of it; and he would hail with joy the proof, that such a crop might ripen.

The

The joy at such a discovery might be such as to dispose him not to listen to a tale of greater good, lest, as being miraculous, it might discredit what was proved before.

However, in performing my duty, it is necessary to develope the facts which are within my knowledge. Mr. Poynter, who is an excellent judge, has closely observed the plant which I recommend to your notice, throughout its growth. He very early remarked to me "this is the plant for us". He states that it has no superfluity of growth; he says that it will grow well if planted at distances of one foot by six inches; he says it will bear three ears to a plant upon an average: and, in the grain without coming to figures he judges that it will yield on indifferent land, a larger crop than the best land. — To be particular, in summing up the contrast between the two kinds, it will be as follows:

	№ 9.	№ 10
Distance of planting	1ft. by 6 in.	2½ ft. by 1ft. 3 in.
Average number of ears to a plant	3	4
That is to say		
Number of plants to one rod of ground	504	84½
Number of ears	1512	338
to which may be added		
The number of grains to one ear	240	240
Number of grains making equal weights	17	10
Proportionate gross weight on same space of ground	8	3
and, though last not least		
Specific gravity	1.27	1.20

I do not continue the contrast down to value, in pounds, shillings and pence, because I am not content to rate the value pound for pound, or as higher in the one by measure for measure seven hundredths only. I know the quality is better; but, in what degree, according to this proportion of greater specific gravity, must be a question for the miller. — In the article of Jamaica-coffee, I find that at two shillings per pound, heavier than that at one shilling and eight pence, only in the proportion of four hundredths and an half.

I need not observe to you, Sir, that the fact of greater heaviness is a strong confirmation of the facts previously stated. Superiority in this particular, besides indicating better quality, is always attendant upon the circumstances of largeness and maturity of crop; and is a criterion of fitness in the plant to the soil and climate.

I have just had an happy opportunity of illustrating the manner in which № 10 is deteriorated by adverse climate. Two ears are in the possession of my father, grown by Daniel

Daniel Brock, Esqr. Bailiff of Guernsey; where, you will please to observe, melons of delicate flavour ripen in the open ground. I have compared these ears with five of the best which I could find in Mr. Poynter's plantation. The ears from Guernsey being deservedly considered a curiosity, and valued too much for their beauty, I could not disfigure them by trying (or performing) the experiment upon them which was necessary to ascertain the comparative degrees of weight with reference to the bulk; but, upon a general comparison by the eye, with the help of common scales, the result is as follows:

Colour. — That of the Guernsey, much the deepest yellow. The contrast as great as that between high and pale coloured beer. This is independent of mould.

State of preservation. — There may be, on close inspection, a very trifling appearance of mould, in one or two of the ears from Guernsey. Some of the Fulham have mould seated on the centre of the grains, so as to give the appearance of a light grey colour to the ear.

Size. — The length of the ears is precisely the same; but the thickness or circumference is decidedly greater in the Guernsey: perhaps one sixth.

Weight. — The five ears of Guernsey amount to twenty-one ounces; the five ears of Fulham, to fifteen ounces.

I have seen but one ear (which is also in possession of my father) equal to these ears from Guernsey, in colour and in firmness; this ear certainly appears as good in every respect, and there is no mould whatever on it. But, this ear was grown with great care, in a walled garden (that of Mr. Biddle), in a favourable aspect, in the parish of Tibthfield; and the land of Tibthfield (in Hampshire) is actually in the southern-most part of England, is at the water's edge, the soil a rich loam upon gravel; the spot being, altogether, contiguous to the southern foot of Portsdown Hill, where it never happens that the wheat is not ripe on the 26th. July. I believe, indeed, that there is a Treaty existing (of ancient date) by which it is agreed with France, that vines shall not be cultivated upon this identical tract of land.

One very essential part of the practical utility of the Indian Corn, is in its virtue for the table, to be eaten green; and, to ascertain the quality of the new kind for this purpose, I, out of the small number which there was, sacrificed one ear, which was eaten by my mother. The circumstance of the smallness of the grains may certainly sometimes be an inconvenience, from the state of the teeth; but, my mother, whose teeth are as numerous and sute as possible, informed me that she had never tasted any of more delicate flavour.

To prove to you by an inspection of the grain that this species of corn, in the endeavouring to draw your attention to which I fear I have already wearied you, is not capable of degenerating in England, I do myself the honour to enclose you samples, marked A, B and C: being, that marked A, the imported seed of No. 9; B, the produce of this seed, grown by Mr. Poynter; C, No. 10, grown by Mr. Poynter. There are ten grains of the latter, and they are much the largest of the three. There are twenty grains of each of the other two, the English being the largest of the two, and, I think, brightest: these are also the heaviest by about one fifth; but, it is to be recollected that the other is old seed. I have no doubt, for my own part, that the climate of England is peculiarly propitious to this species. Mr. Poynter observes that "it has no superfluity of growth": and, in fact, its stalk and leaves are so small, that it is hardly capable of shading the ground. In a wet Summer, it is exempt from the effect of constant shade to the ground, and every ray of Sun is admitted to approach its root. The luxuriance of leaves, on the contrary, is required in a dry or hot climate, in order that the ground may be darkened for several months. To add another word as to the amount of crop, I think it must be allowed that the quantity of Corn may reasonably be expected to be larger, where the bulk of stalk is smaller, on a given quantity of ground. The difference in this respect is immense, between the two kinds, Nos. 9 and 10. The latter, I will venture to assert, would, on good land, produce fifteen or twenty tons (green) to the acre; nay, I am certain it would load it with twenty-five tons; whereas, the former, I am equally certain, could not be made to grow to the weight of four tons of stalks and leaves.

In fine, no one can doubt that our climate is more congenial for this plant than any other. The plant adopts it instantly. It requires no "climating". Whereas, it is but too evident that the Sun or the air of Guernsey is better relished by the larger sort. The fruit of this, after being propagated here, has acquired which is more the paleness of premature death than the yellow of maturity; and its inferior substance is upon a par with the yet unexhausted stalk of the grosser part of the plant. Alien it is in England, and incapable of naturalization: and, I bid it adieu, as being out of its sphere in the King's Dominions, save within the Bailiwick of Guernsey.

If, Sir, I am correct in the conclusion in which I have expressed myself so confidently; and tending to which I have endeavoured to adduce some proofs to you, the plant in describing which I have taken the liberty to trespass so much on your time, has been undeniably given by Providence for the benefit of our island. By the cultivation of it, in effect the Sun of Guernsey is shed over England; and, with the labour of English men and the wits of English women, their soil may produce, in human food, double what it has ever hitherto borne.

Hoping, Sir, that the errors in this Statement, except they be at variance with truth, may escape severe observation,

I have the honour to be,
Your most humble and
Most obedient
Servant,
Wm. Cobbett, Jr.

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trade.

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[Part III. Containing, Mr. Hulme's Introduction to his Journal—Mr. Hulme's Journal, made during a Tour in the Western Countries of America, in which Tour he visited Mr. Birkbeck's Settlement . . .] *London, Printed for Sherwood, Neely, and Jones*, 1818-1819. First English Edition, 8vo, pp. (iii), (i) blank, 610, with a folding engraved map, half morocco. **£45**

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"Cobbett's Corn" was Indian corn. He considered it to be of vast importance to the American economy: "Much of the ease and happiness of the people of the United States of America is ascribed to the absence of grinding taxation; but that absence alone, without the cultivation of Indian corn, would not, in the space of only about a hundred and fifty years, have created a powerful nation, consisting of twelve millions of souls; a population surpassing that of England and Wales. This plant is the great blessing of the country. In my "Years residence in America", I describe it as the greatest blessing that God ever gave to man". *General Introductory Observations, A Treatise on Cobbett's Corn.*

Dawson 68

Cobbett (William) Botany

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Autograph letter, signed, 1829

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